

<b>14.11 Child Protective Services Case File Organization, Documentation and Disposition</b>	
<b>Application:</b> To All Department of Children's Services Child Protective Services and Special Investigations Unit Employees	
<b>Authority:</b> TCA: 37-5-105 (3); 37-5-106	<b>Standards: COA:</b> PA-RPM 6.01; 6.02; PA-RPM 7, PA-CFS 9.04
<b>Commissioner:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Original Effective Date: 12/01/23 Current Effective Date: 12/01/23	Supersedes: 14.16 08/06/21 Last Review Date: 12/01/23
<b>Glossary:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Expunge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To destroy or mark for deletion.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

## Policy Statement:

All child protective services case records shall be maintained in a standardized confidential manner and shall be safeguarded from unauthorized and improper disclosure of information.

## Purpose:

The TFACTS record serves as the official record and a reference tool for case DCS and private provider Case Manager, for collection of data and preparation of required documents, forms, and assessments on children and families served. The procedures in this policy provide guidelines for the manner in which information is composed, maintained and expunged to ensure a systematic method for the creation of CPS case records. Emphasis is placed on being purposeful, specific, factual, and focus on the investigative, assessment and/or treatment process. The case record will summarize case work activity, including family strengths, efforts to address safety and risk issues, a summary of the activities of any treatment agents and/or family support teams. The record will also include the family's involvement in and reaction to services provided.

## Procedures:

### A. Confidentiality

1. All case records are confidential (refer to Policy [14.15, Confidentiality of Child Protective Services Cases](#)). When a hard copy is created, it must be marked "**CONFIDENTIAL**" on the front of the folder and must be stored out of public view.

2. When writing case recordings, staff shall be mindful of the right to *confidentiality* and shall not include information about persons unrelated to the case, except where those persons that have a direct effect on the client child/youth and family (in which case, only relevant information shall be documented).
3. When writing case recordings, without sacrificing accuracy and completeness, staff shall be sensitive to the emotional well-being of the client child/youth and family in the choice of terminology used (being mindful that the client child/youth and family may be voluntarily or involuntarily exposed to the documentation in the future).
4. The release of confidential case file information must be in accordance with Federal and State laws, statutes, rules and regulations, DCS policies [9.4, Confidential Child-Specific Information](#), [9.5, Access and Release of Confidential Child-Specific Information](#), [14.15, Confidentiality of Child Protective Services Cases](#) and DCS Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) policies and procedures as applicable.

## **B. General Case Documentation for Case Recordings Guidelines**

1. CPS General Case recording guidelines will include:
  - a) **Content** - Includes a summary of the interactions, discussions, agreements, decisions, evidence of facts or issues that were discussed either face to face or by other contact means. Include discussions around the use of assessments and how they are being utilized in planning. Discuss how the family is engaged in exploring all factors or elements impacting their current global situation. When applicable, indicate whether or not the child/youth had 1:1 time with the Case Manager and a brief description of that interaction. The individual conversation with the child(ren) always includes discussion and assessment of safety. Specifically address the strengths and needs identified in all family case plans. Whatever purpose of contact was identified (i.e., safety, permanency, well-being or service planning, etc.), the narrative needs to reflect what was discussed and how it relates to the long term view of the family case and/or in the resolution of the issues or concerns that brought them to the attention of the Department.
  - b) **Observation** - describe in observable/measurable terms: individual behaviors witnessed; observations regarding the appearance of the children in relation to appropriate dress for current conditions, whether or not they appear well-nourished, any evidence of developmental delays, illness or need for medical care; the interactions among parties present including interaction with Case Manager; significant environmental factors; safety and risk factors including observed strengths/needs; and the family's response to interventions or services being implemented.

- c) **Next Steps** - State what is to be done next as a result of this contact, or as a natural progression of the case management process.
- d) **Transfer summary:** details case activity if case is to be transitioned.
- e) **Closing summary:** a narrative description of reason for opening, current safety, risk and well-being status of child and family, classification decision and the justification, the case plan including any referrals made and the family's reaction to case closure that forms the basis of the ***CPS Case Summary and Classification Decision of Child Abuse/Neglect Referral, CS-0740*** on the appropriate screens in TFACTS.

**Note:** When substantiating an allegation, the [Work Aid 1](#) definition of that allegation is included in case recordings such as a CPIT and/or Notation.

2. Case recordings must:
  - ◆ Be relevant, reliable and written in clear and complete sentences, and
  - ◆ Not include slang language or subjective/personal value judgments.
3. Abbreviations and acronyms used must be commonly understood and acceptable.
4. E-mails will not be pasted directly into case recordings. Staff will note in the narrative section that contact was made with an individual through email and noting only information pertaining to the case. Discussion of topics unrelated to the case will not be contained within the narrative.
5. Handwritten notes will not be maintained as part of the case record.

**Note: Documentation is entered throughout the life of the case. Documentation may** be added after a case is closed upon consultation with a CPS supervisor when there is a legitimate business reason including but not limited to receipt of additional records from an external partner, documentation of case tasks that were completed but not timely entered, post closure reviews or court hearings that took place after the case was closed.

### **C. Case Record Composition**

TFACTS serves as the official DCS record. Documents or information including case recordings, assessments and service plans that are located in TFACTS are not to be printed for the purpose of sharing with other program areas or case records. Additional records not automated by TFACTS are to be uploaded into the TFACTS case record as technology allows. Additional information, pertinent to the record but not automated by TFACTS, is to be uploaded into the TFACTS case record as technology allows. Information relative to case evidence that cannot be uploaded into the TFACTS

case record is maintained in a supplementary hard copy record (i.e.; DVDs, large medical records, birth certificates). Composition for any created hard copy files is maintained per the following guidelines:

1. Each family shall have one (1) record.
2. All documents will be filed in a classification folder with two (2) dividers and the case record contents will be filed according to **CS-0726, Child Protective/Non-Custodial Case File Documentation and Organization Checklist**. The CPS tab pages will be printed on blue copy paper. The Family Crisis Intervention Program (FCIP) tab pages will be printed on yellow copy paper.
3. The inside cover of each folder will be reserved for the Records Disposition Authority (RDA) information to be recorded.
4. The case record contents including forms will be filed in ascending (↑) order (most recent on top).
5. The case record will be labeled on the tab portion of the folder with the mother's or primary caregiver's last name listed first separated by a comma followed by the mother's or primary caregiver's first name.

**D. Case Recording Guidelines- Investigation and Assessment- Monthly Summary Documentation**

1. Case Summary (Case summary of all contacts, dates of contacts and activities completed in one recording)
  - a) Family/Household Composition:
    - ◆ Name(s), DOB(s), relationships
    - ◆ Address
    - ◆ Phone number(s)
    - ◆ Email
    - ◆ Non-custodial parent name, DOB, relationship
    - ◆ Non-custodial parent address
    - ◆ Non-custodial parent phone number
    - ◆ Non-custodial parent email
  - b) Engagement reflected in the following interviews:
    - ◆ Caretaker interview(s)
    - ◆ Sibling interview(s)
    - ◆ Home Visit(s)
    - ◆ Referent Contact including contact to gather more information
2. If other issues outside of the initial allegation were identified, how did the Case Manager address these issues

3. Notice to juvenile court at assignment/classification and notice to District Attorney/CPIT on severe abuse, per local protocols.
4. A separate case recording is entered for:
  - ◆ Initial Alleged Child Victim (ACV) contacts;
  - ◆ Good Faith Efforts;
  - ◆ Subsequent contacts with ACV(s);
  - ◆ CPIT (if applicable); and
  - ◆ Administrative Reviews by Supervisor as a separate case recording (Refer to DCS Policy [4.4, Performance and Case Supervision Practice Guidelines and Criteria](#)).
5. The CS-0740/Summary Tab serves as the Closing Summary.
6. Timeframes for entry of case recordings are as follows:
  - a) Face to Face contacts with the ACV are entered into TFACTS within ten (10) business days of the contact.
  - b) Case Summaries are entered by the end of the calendar month during which the contacts and activities took place.
  - c) All other case recordings, including contacts and events taking place in a calendar month and not included in the Case Summary, are entered within thirty (30) calendar days of the contact or event.

#### **E. Extended Case Recording Guidelines- Investigation and Assessment**

1. The following CPS cases require extended documentation:
  - ◆ Cases with allegations of Child Death/Near Death;
  - ◆ Cases with any allegation being Substantiated;
  - ◆ Cases with a classification of Services Needed, Court Ordered; and/or
  - ◆ Court action resulting in removal into state custody or a transfer of custody to a third party.
2. Extended Documentation includes the following:
  - a) A description of each case contact must be made in the case record.
  - b) Face to Face contacts with the ACV are entered into TFACTS within ten (10) business days of the contact.
3. Each contact will be documented in TFACTS case recordings within thirty (30) days from the date of the contact.
4. The format of case recordings may include the following:
  - ◆ The full date (month, day, year) and time of contact;
  - ◆ Contact Type;
  - ◆ Contact Method;
  - ◆ Name of person making the contact (DCS employee);

- ◆ Names of persons present during the contact;
  - ◆ Summary of facts and issues discussed;
  - ◆ Observations of safety/risk factors including strengths and needs;
  - ◆ Observations of the child/family; and
  - ◆ List of the evidence that supports the facts.
5. The narrative of case recordings includes:
- ◆ The name of person contacted and relationship to child;
  - ◆ Summary of facts and issues discussed;
  - ◆ Observations of safety/risk factors including strengths and needs;
  - ◆ Observations of the child/family; and
  - ◆ List of the evidence that supports the facts.
  - ◆ Statements of future plan, actions or next steps.

Note: Documentation content for case recordings for Child Protective Services case files are in accordance with [OCS Quality Documentation Guide](#).

#### **F. Case Recording Guidelines- Investigation and Assessment- Condensed Documentation**

This documentation is acceptable for cases classified as AUPU, No Services Needed, Services Recommended and Services Needed.

**Note:** This should not be used for Child Death, Preliminary Near Death, any substantiated or court action case.

1. A separate case recording is entered for:
- ◆ Initial Alleged Child Victim (ACV) contacts;
  - ◆ Good Faith Efforts;
  - ◆ Subsequent contacts with ACV(s);
  - ◆ CPIT (if applicable); and
  - ◆ Administrative Reviews (Refer to Policy [4.4, Performance and Case Supervision Practice Guidelines and Criteria](#)).
  - ◆ Family/Household Composition:
  - ◆ Name(s), DOB(s), relationship(s)
  - ◆ Address
  - ◆ Phone number(s)
  - ◆ Email
  - ◆ Non-custodial parent name, DOB, relationship
  - ◆ Non-custodial parent address

- ◆ Non-custodial parent phone number
- ◆ Non-custodial parent email
- 2. All other documentation is completed on the **CS-0740 TFACTS** Summary Tab to include:
  - a) A summary of the child(ren) interviews to include information about the allegations, their health, safety, school, services, visitation with noncustodial parent (if applicable), discipline, independent living/skills and an observation of their appearance. This can include sibling information if they were not ACV's. A brief description about the home visit, conditions, and safe sleep (if applicable).
  - b) A summary of any collateral contacts, records reviewed, or additional information obtained during the case. This could be the information obtained from the parent/caretaker if they are not the perpetrator. Be sure to include information to support the global assessment of the household and the allegations.
  - c) A summary of the perpetrators report of the incident.
  - d) A brief summary of why DCS received a report of harm- does not need to be a cut and paste of the referral.
  - e) A summary of the findings of the interviews and investigation to support, or oppose the allegations, any services in place, services offered, presentation to CPIT (if applicable). If transferring to FSS, note that. This section must include a statement for notice to Juvenile Court per local practice for case assignment and classification/closure.

## **G. Supervisory Responsibility**

When supervisory staff gives directions to case management staff regarding a specific action to be taken (or not taken) related to a case, that conversation will be entered by the supervisor in **TFACTS** per DCS Policy [4.4, Performance and Case Supervision Practice Guidelines and Criteria.](#)

## **H. Contact with DCS Legal Counsel**

1. Case consultation between DCS staff and DCS Legal Counsel may be documented on the appropriate screens or case recordings in **TFACTS** but must be limited only to the date, time, person(s) contacted, and purpose of contact.
2. Specific content of the discussion is considered attorney-client privilege and should not be included in the case notes.

## **I. Identification of Closed Files**

Closed CPS records will be destroyed in accordance with the appropriate Records Disposition Authority (RDA):

- ◆ **RDA 2993-Closed Child Safety Case Management Files**

## **J. Methods of Record Disposal**

Approved methods for destroying Child Protective Services confidential paper record information will be as outlined in DCS policy [9.4, Confidential Child-Specific Information](#).

## **K. Disposal Documentation**

Form **GS-0989, Certificate of Record Destruction**, must be completed in accordance with DCS Policy [9.4, Confidential Child-Specific Information](#).

### **Forms:**

[CS-0726, Child Protective Services/Non-Custodial Case File Documentation and Organization Checklist](#)

[GS-0989, Certificate of Record Destruction \(non-DCS form\)](#)

[CS-0740, Child Protective Services Case Summary and Classification Decision of Child Abuse/Neglect Referral](#)

### **Collateral Documents:**

[9.4, Confidential Child-Specific Information](#)

[9.5, Access and Release of Confidential Child-Specific Information](#)

[14.15, Confidentiality of Child Protective Services Cases](#)

[OCS Quality Documentation Guide](#)